

THE COMMON LANDS OF BITTERNE MANOR

by

MARY SMITH and PHIL BUDD



Hawthorn



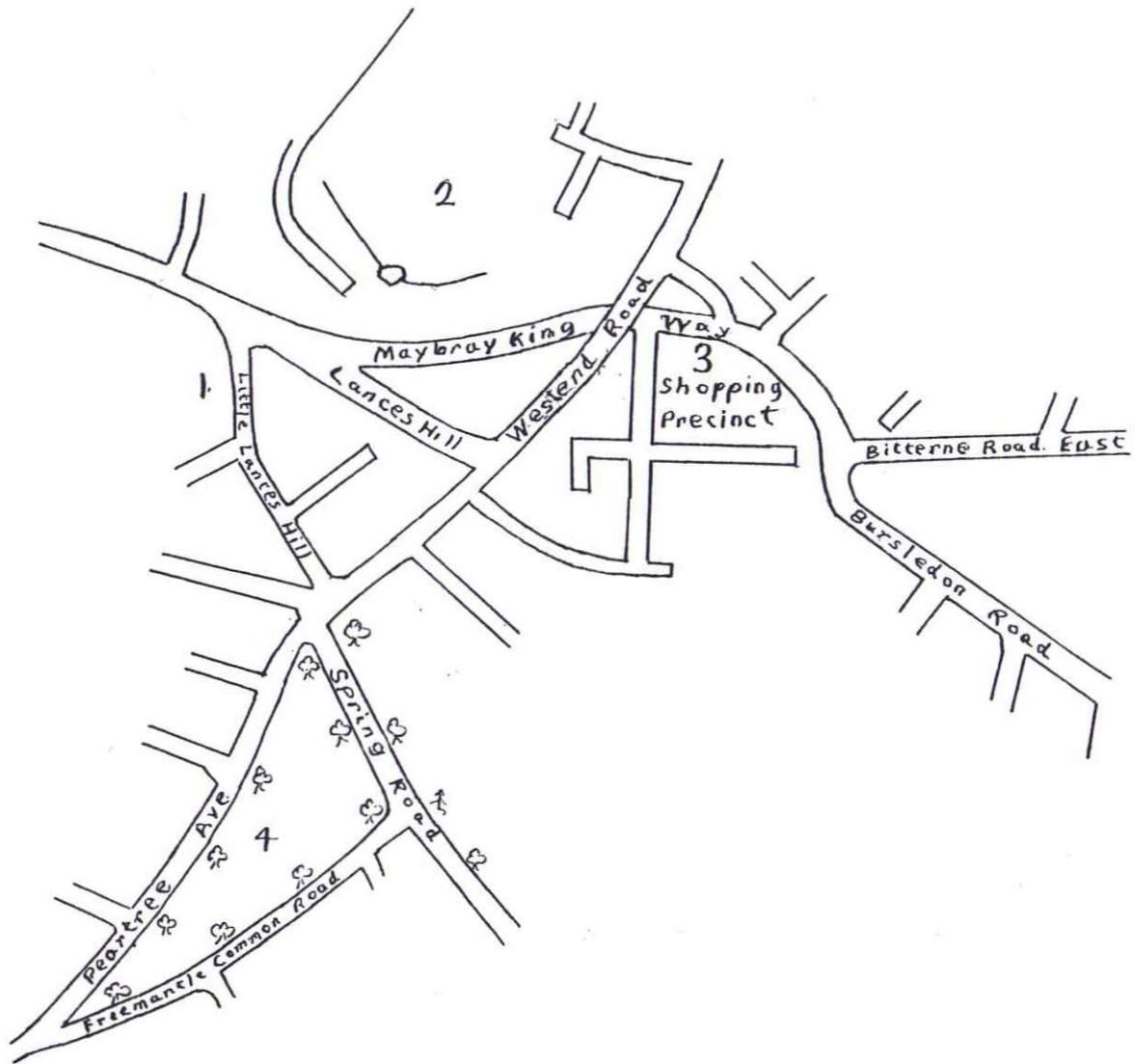
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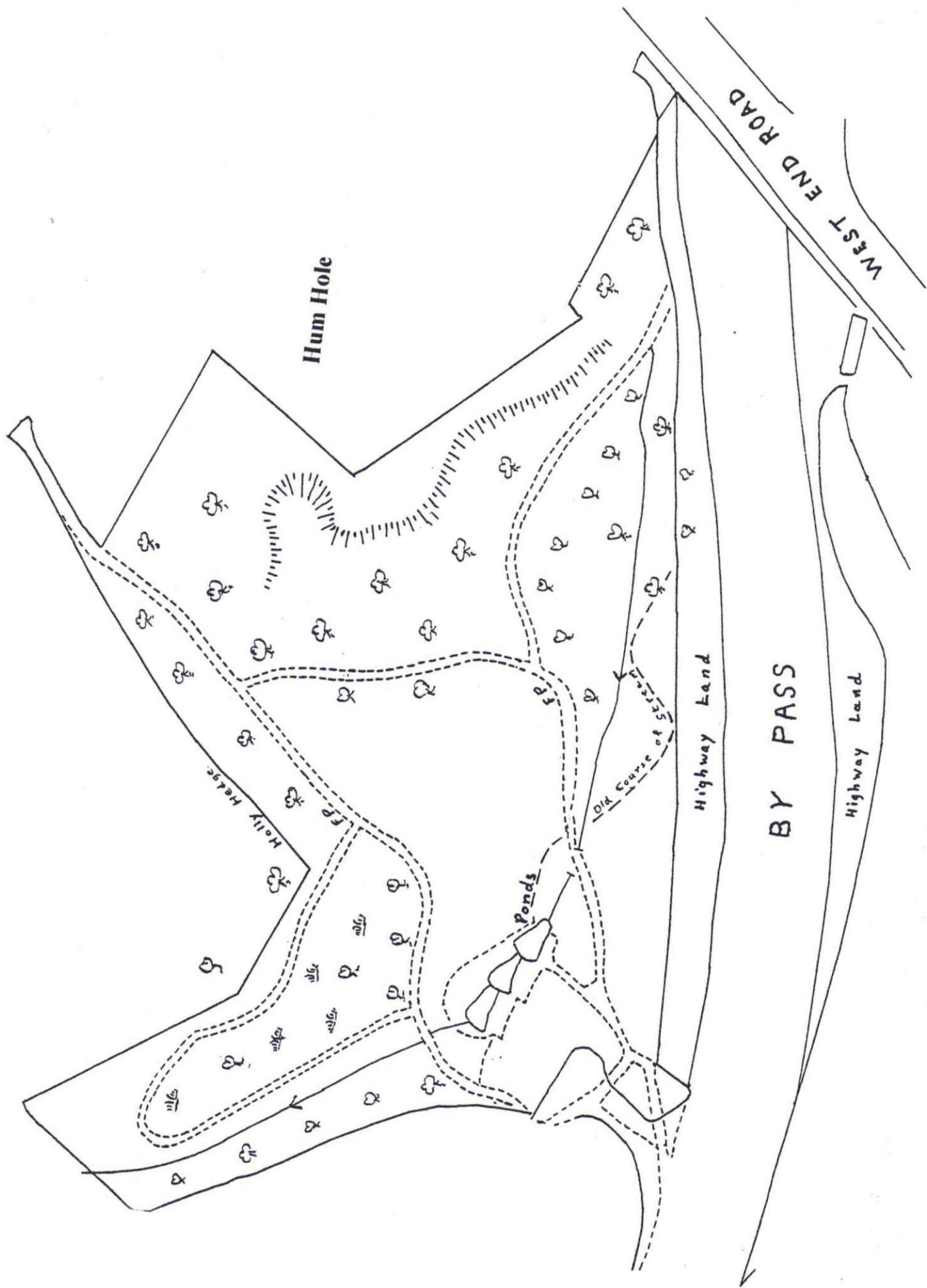
Bitterne Manorial Wastes

1. Little Lances Hill
2. Hum Hole
3. Angel Crescent
4. Freemantle Common



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Hum Hole 1997

THE COMMON LANDS OF BITTERNE MANOR

In 1996 there are four open spaces, remnants of the common lands and manorial 'waste' of Bitterne. Freemantle Common, Hum Hole, a patch of Angel Crescent (old Pound Street) and the fragment of a former triangle of land at the junction of Lances Hill and Little Lances Hill.

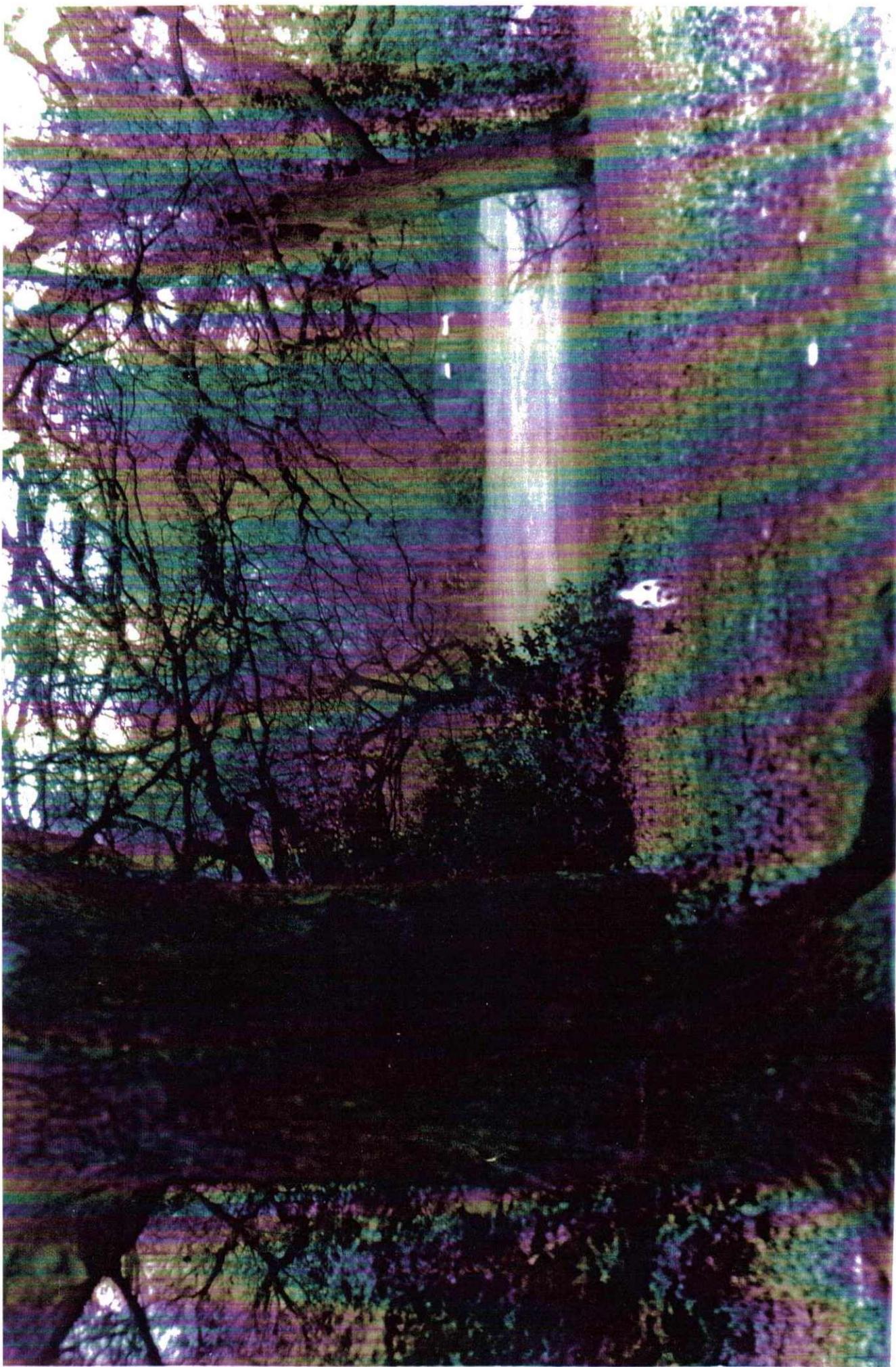
This last, Little Lances Hill, once a neat green space, is now a mere shadow of its former self before the bypass was built. Years ago neighbouring residents kept an eye on the trees and trimmed the shrubs. Road improvements and the closure of this end of Little Lances Hill meant a marked reduction in size and the loss of two mature trees and all the shrubbery. Today there remains just one ash tree and the ground cover is an array of inspection covers and bollards. As far as is known, no attempt was made in 1965 to register this as common land. It is now in such a sorry state that it is tempting to dismiss it altogether, were it not a reminder of the original commons and should be cherished as it once was.

Hum Hole, 'part of the common lands of Bitterne in the parish of South Stoneham', was enclosed by Act of Parliament in the last century at the time of widespread enclosures, and the land parcelled out. Mr James Dett acquired several dozen acres, but oral tradition has it that not all of Hum Hole was in effect closed, being marshy and unsuitable for building by Victorian standards.

Mr E A Chalk for Southampton Commons and Parks Protection Society researched the enclosures of Hum Hole in an effort to trace unenclosed common land for registration under the 1965 Act for Common Registration, but was advised not to press for registration because of legal complications. In 1967 the Town Map shows Hum Hole as public open space, and the land beside Lances Hill was covered with gorse and scrub, with apple trees. A track had been worn leading from the top of the hill to Glenfield Crescent.

Several streams ran down from Beezley's Copse, the wooded area above, to a pond and then to the stream that is channelled under the Glenfield Estate. Here the banks were well wooded with beech, hazel, birch, holly and sycamore, and the original ground flora held wood anemone, bluebell, primroses (until the development of Glenfield!), yellow pimpernel and a variety of sedges and rushes. The most interesting plant here is the wood horsetail (*Equisetum sylvaticum*) which has been 'protected' in the sense that the boggy ground it favours has not been drained or cleared.

Before the bypass was built the city had to exchange land in Hum Hole for Bitterne Recreation Ground, itself an old common albeit not registered as such in 1965 and lay out the new recreational area. The hillside of Hum Hole was cleared, and the water piped underground. Any overflow issues from a pipe above three new ponds on the site of the old pond. The new stream-bed was briefly open and the woody horsetail flourished on the banks for a few years, until vegetation and trees enclosed it. As the ground here is very sandy silting of the ponds has been a perpetual problem.



Freemantle Common 1997

The construction of pathways, steps and bridges for the new recreation ground, with the dumping of material from the bypass works, led to much degradation of this part of Hum Hole. The spring flowers disappeared and only the yellow pimpernel has returned – in the dry stream-bed.

Nettles and bramble have taken over much of this area though the part by the ponds was landscaped with trees such as cherry and willow and roses by the original seats.

A further attempt to stop the erosion of the hillside above the ponds, where the turf is thin and patchy, was made by planting willow, birch and holly. This has not proved entirely successful as the 'desire-line' to the ponds remains and children and dogs run through the surviving saplings.

The open ground above the ponds is designated 'amenity grassland'. Efforts have been made, without success, to replace some of the trees lost here and to screen the wooden fence of the bypass.

In 1990 the Itchen and Hamble Countryside Project was commissioned to draw up a management plan for Hum Hole. Its proposals for improvement of Hum Hole were 'confined to initial implementation proposals and did not cover longer-term management'. This in effect meant that three or four hazels below the ponds were 'coppiced' and Bitterne residents planted dozens of saplings and willow-whips beside the bypass. These were then left for nearly two years before any steps were taken to remove black plastic sheeting and clear the ground of rubbish. Today, the surviving rowans and birches with the odd blackthorn make an effective copse linking

the existing woodland and enclosing the valley below. Here the long grass is left unmown which protects emerging plants such as mallow and vetches, thistles and ragwort. Stray buddleias attract plenty of butterflies, especially Red Admirals, Peacocks, Painted Ladies and Small Whites.

The belt of woodland which runs across the higher ground extends to the rear of the Glenfield School site and on to Montgomery Road.

Hum Hole is part of a larger 'site alert' site in the City's Conservation Strategy and certainly much needs to be done here, as the woodland has long been neglected, especially the 'shrubbery' of Beezley's Copse. Of recent years some old derelict laurels and moribund ivy-clad trees have been cleared from the path to Bitterne, but the whole area needs very careful clearing to assist the re-generation of natural forest trees such as are found nearby: oak, beech, hornbeam, ash, birch and sweet-chestnut.

The ground-cover is largely ivy and brambles, though along the wood edge field roses, enchanter's nightshade and other hedgerow flowers grow. The range of trees here is good with the addition of hazel, willow species, alder, holly and cherry. There is still some gorse of the old common, privet and invasive sycamores. An interesting variety of fungi usually appears in the autumn.

After the completion of the bypass the land beside Lances Hill which was used for the dumping of rubble and then for contractors' materials was landscaped with turf, trees and flowerbeds and sown with wildflower seeds. A large swathe was subsequently used for an additional car park.

The Manor of Bitterne was granted by Edward I in 1284 to the Bishop of Winchester and at the time of the enclosures in 1812 the Church Commissioners awarded Bitterne Common or Freemantle Common to Bitterne Village in the parish of South Stoneham, as an open space in perpetuity. When in 1925 the Borough of Southampton (as it then was) annexed Bitterne, Sholing and Woolston it paid a nominal fee for their commons.

Bitterne Common has been subjected to far more 'parkification' than Hum Hole. One of the first actions of Southampton Borough was to widen Peartree Avenue by removing the elm hedge that ran the length of the Common and setting back the footpath when the Merry Oak estate was built. The common gorse was grubbed out to enable the new residents to play there.

The whole area is criss-crossed by gas and water mains, deep sewers, electricity and telephone lines. Every alteration, repair or extension adds to the damage already inflicted on the Common. After the last war, when there had been a static water tank and an air-raid warden's post, it was still possible to see wild flowers among the trees; white campion, wild golden-rod, buttercups and stitchwort. There was still a thicket of pussy-willow that made a fine show in spring.

After the laying of a deep sewer, which officially necessitated the removal of one hawthorn, several other trees including a fine hornbeam were felled. All the beeches by Redlands Drive were infected by a fungus that attacked their damaged roots, and all were dead within a few years. The last was blown down in the great gale of 1976, rotten to the core.

Until the re-alignment of Spring Road and a new pathway across the green, the grass by the Brownlow estate was left uncut, as was the lower end of the Common. Regular mowing now results in thin, poor turf between the trees, and few wild flowers to enliven the scene. However, the buttercups and clovers are still growing, to appear as the daffodils inflicted upon the Common begin to die down and they make a brave show until the daffodils are cut (this ability of buttercups and daisies to survive in similar circumstances is noticeable elsewhere in the city).

A resident who has watched Freemantle Common from the time it became part of Southampton reported the loss of sixty mature trees by 1965 and innumerable more have since been felled. With the loss of trees has come a decline in the number of birds which were most frequently seen there, especially chaffinches. Tawny owls no longer nest locally and few wintering birds such as redwings are now seen.

Since acquisition by the Borough of Southampton Bitterne's Commons have all been subject to urbanisation 'parkification'; and treated with scant regard by the City Council and public services. Year after year 'travellers' encamp on Freemantle Common for weeks at a time - three times in 1996 alone - and every visitation leaves the Common a poorer place, more thread-bare than ever. The grass where rubbish accumulated during the dustmen's strikes has never recovered, just as some of the 'amenity grassland' of Hum Hole never survived the building of the bypass. That is why we submit that Bitterne open grounds need proper on-going management to allow for natural regeneration. The one fine beech tree enclosed by chestnut fencing is a splendid example of what results from a simple measure of protection around its trunk.

APPENDIX 1 – Bitterne Safari*

This information is taken with permission from 'Chapter 6: All Change!' of **Bitterne Safari** detailing facts and figures about the decline in numbers of species following the building of the bypass. However, when the land was cleared for the route of the bypass and left fallow, the following wild plants appeared beside the underpass, presumably from dormant seeds.

<i>Parietaria judaica</i>	Pellitory-of-the-Wall
<i>3 Rumex Spp</i>	Dock
<i>Polygonum bistorta</i>	Common Bistort
<i>Atriplex patula</i>	Common Orache
<i>Chenopodium album</i>	Fat-hen
<i>Epilobium augustifolium</i>	Rosebay Willowherb
<i>Gnaphalium uliginosum</i>	Marsh Cudweed
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear Thistle
<i>Arctium lappa</i>	Greater Burdock
<i>Calystegia sepium</i>	Hedge Bindweed
<i>Mycelis muralis</i>	Wall Letuce
<i>Potentilla anserina</i>	Silverweed
<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	Germander Speedwell
<i>Matricaria recutita</i>	Scented Mayweed
<i>Tussilago farfara</i>	Colts'-foot
<i>Lapsana communis</i>	Nipplewort

Silybum marianum
Anthemis arvensis

Milk Thistle
Corn Chamomile

+ a further 18 plants still to be found at Hum Hole

* 'Bitterne Safari' by Rev Stanley C Wincott. First published 1986 by the Bitterne Local History Society.

APPENDIX 2 – Species Lists

HUM HOLE (UP TO 1996)

Flora	
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow
<i>Agrostis canina</i>	Brown Bent
<i>Agrostis tenuis</i>	Common Bent
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	False Oat-grass
<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>	Mugwort
<i>Arum maculatum</i>	Cuckoo-pint / Lords and Ladies
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Daisy
<i>Betula pubescens</i>	Downy Birch
<i>Betula pendula</i>	Silver Birch
<i>Buddleja davidii</i>	Buddleia
<i>Calystegia sepium</i>	Hedge Bindweed
<i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i>	Shepherd's-Purse
<i>Cardamine hirsuta</i>	Hairy Bitter-Cress
<i>Carex pendula</i>	Pendulous Sedge
<i>Carex remota</i>	Remote Sedge
<i>Carex sylvatica</i>	Wood-Sedge
<i>Carpinus betulus</i>	Hornbeam
<i>Castanea sativa</i>	Sweet Chestnut

<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	Hardheads
<i>Circaeа lutetiana</i>	Enchanter's-Nightshade
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping thistle
<i>Clematis vitalba</i>	Old Man's Beard
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot grass
<i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i>	Wavy Hair-grass
<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	Great Hairy Willowherb
<i>Epilobium montanum</i>	Broad-leaved Willowherb
<i>Equisetum sylvaticum</i>	Wood Horsetail
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	Beech
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash
<i>Geranium molle</i>	Dove's-foot Cranesbill
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Herb Robert
<i>Geum urbanum</i>	Wood Avens
<i>Glyceria declinata</i>	Small Sweet-grass
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Hogweed
<i>Hordeum murinum</i>	Wall Barley
<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	Cat's-ear
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Holly
<i>Juncus conglomeratus</i>	Conglomerate Rush
<i>Lamium album</i>	White Dead-nettle
<i>Lamium purpureum</i>	Red Dead-nettle
<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>	Meadow Vetchling
<i>Lathyrus sylvestris</i>	Narrow-leaved Everlasting-pea
<i>Lathyrus tuberosus</i>	Tuberous Pea
<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>	Privet

<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial Rye-grass	<i>Trifolium dubium</i>	Lesser Yellow Trefoil
<i>Lotus uliginosus</i>	Large Birdsfoot-trefoil	<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Red Clover
<i>Lysimachia nemorum</i>	Yellow Pimpernel	<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White Clover
<i>Medicago lupulina</i>	Black Medick	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>	Gorse
<i>Melilotus officinalis</i>	Common Melilot	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Nettle
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort Plantain		
<i>Plantago major</i>	Rat's-tail Plantain		Fungi (1995 - 1996)
<i>Poa pratensis</i>	Smooth-stalked Meadow-grass	<i>Amanita citrina</i>	
<i>Polygonum lapathifolium</i>	Pale Persicaria	<i>Amanita excelsa</i>	
<i>Polygonum persicaria</i>	Persicaria	<i>Amanita muscaria</i>	
<i>Prunus avium</i>	Wild Cherry	<i>Armillaria mellea</i>	
<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>	Cherry-Laurel	<i>Armillaria polymyces</i>	
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn	<i>Boletus chrysenteron</i>	
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	Bracken	<i>Boletus erythropus</i>	
<i>Pulicaria dysenterica</i>	Fleabane	<i>Clitocybe nebularis</i>	
<i>Quercus robur</i>	Pedunculate Oak	<i>Collybia butyracea</i>	
<i>Quercus ilex</i>	Holm Oak	<i>Collybia dryophilia</i>	
<i>Ranunculus ficaria</i>	Lesser Celandine	<i>Coprinus atramentarius</i>	
<i>Rhododendron ponticum</i>	Rhododendron	<i>Coprinus comatus</i>	
<i>Rosa arvensis</i>	Field Rose	<i>Coprinus disseminatus</i>	
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>	Bramble	<i>Laccaria amethystina</i>	
<i>Rumex crispus</i>	Curled Dock	<i>Lacrymaria velutina</i>	
<i>Salix spp. (planted)</i>	Willow spp.	<i>Lepista nuda</i>	
<i>Senecio squalidus</i>	Oxford Ragwort	<i>Lycoperdon perlatum</i>	
<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>	Groundsel	<i>Lycoperdon pyriforme</i>	
<i>Sisymbrium officinale</i>	Hedge Mustard	<i>Melanoleuca melaleuca</i>	
<i>Solanum dulcamara</i>	Bitter-Sweet	<i>Mycena pura</i>	
<i>Sorbus acauparia</i>	Rowan	<i>Piptoporus betulinus</i>	
<i>Stellaria media</i>	Chickweed		

Tricholoma argyraceum
Tricholoma fulvum
Stereum hirsutum
Xylaria hypoxylon

Ligustrum vulgare
* *Ornithogalum umbellatum*
Pinus sylvestris

Privet
Star-of-Bethlehem
Scots Pine

Ribwort Plantain
Greater Plantain
Annual Meadow-grass
Persicaria
Bracken

Meadow Buttercup
Bramble
Curled Dock

Grey Willow
Groundsel
Golden Rod
Greater Stitchwort
Common Chickweed
Dandelion
Red Clover
White Clover
Gorse
English Elm
Nettle

FREEMANTLE COMMON

Flora

Acer pseudoplatanus
Achillea millefolium
Agrostis canina
Agrostis gigantea
Anthriscus sylvestris
Atriplex littoralis
Bellis perennis
Carpinus betulinus
Castanea sativa
Crataegus monogyna
Endymion non-scriptus
Fagus sylvatica
Hedera helix
Hodeum murinum
Ilex aquifolium
† *Lathyrus aphaca*

Sycamore
Yarrow
Brown Bent
Black Bent
Cow Parsley
Grass-leaved Orache
Daisy
Hornbeam
Sweet Chestnut
Hawthorn
Bluebell (Garden creeper)
Beech
Ivy
Wall Barley
Holly
Yellow Vetchling

Plantago lanceolata
Plantago major
Poa annua
Polygonum persicaria
Pteridium aquilinum
Ranunculus acris
Rubus fruticosa
Rumex crispus
Salix cinerea
Senecio vulgaris
* *Solidago virgaurea*
* *Stellaria holostea*
Stellaria media
Taraxacum officinale
Trifolium pratense
Trifolium repens
Ulex europaea
Ulmus procera
Urtica dioica

† First recorded 1995

* Not recorded for some twenty years

HUM HOLE RECORDS – PHIL BUDD

* Aquatic life in the ponds/stream

Fungi

(extra species not listed above)

Flammulina velutipes

6/2/95

Gymnopilus hybridus

27/4/92

Russula cyanoxantha

14/7/81

Flora

Liverworts:

Pellia epiphylla

14/7/81

Fauna

Nematodes:

* *Gordius sp* (Hairworm)

? date 1985

Annelids:

* *Tubifex sp*

9/7/89

Molluscs:

* *Limnaea stagnalis* (Great Pond Snail)

16/3/95

Crustacea:

* *Gammarus pulex* (Freshwater Shrimp)

13/3/96

Insects:

Odonata:

* *Anax imperator* (Emperor Dragonfly)

10/8/81

* *Sympetrum striolatum* (Common Darter)

18/8/96

* *Sympetrum sanguineum* (Ruddy Darter)

(1 male)

6/6/96

* *Coenagrion puella* (Azure Damselfly)



* *Pyrrhosoma nymphula* (Large Red Damselfly)

6/6/96

Orthoptera:

Chorthippus brunneus (Field Grasshopper)

10/8/81

Hemiptera:

Pentatoma rufipes (Forest Bug)

9/7/89

* *Gerris sp* (Pondskater)

9/7/89

* *Velia caprai* (Water Cricket)

16/3/95

* *Notonecta glauca* (Backswimmer)

9/7/89

Philaenus spumarius (Frog-hopper)

9/7/89

Lassus lanio (a leafhopper)

9/7/89

Lepidoptera:

Butterflies:

Pararge aegeria (Speckled Wood)

14/4/95

Pyronia tithonus (Gatekeeper)

18/8/96

Maniola jurtina (Meadow Brown)

18/8/96

Argynnis paphia (Silver-washed Fritillary)

? 1994

Vanessa atalanta (Red Admiral)

18/8/96

Cynthia cardui (Painted Lady)

18/8/96

Aglais urticae (Small Tortoiseshell)

20/4/96

Inachis io (Peacock)

18/8/96

Polygonia c-album (Comma)

18/8/96

Gonepteryx rhamni (Brimstone)

20/4/96

Pieris brassicae (Large White)

10/8/81

Pieris rapae (Small White)

18/8/96

Pieris napi (Green-veined White)

25/7/95

Strymonidia W-album (White-letter Hairstreak)

4/7/95

Quercusia quercus (Purple Hairstreak)

25/7/95

Celastrina argiolus (Holly Blue)

4/7/95

Ochlodes venata (Large Skipper)

4/7/95

<i>Thymelicus sylvestris</i> (Small Skipper)	25/7/95	Hymenoptera:	
<i>Thymelicus lineola</i> (Essex Skipper)	4/7/95	<i>Amblyteles armatorius</i> (an ichneumon fly)	10/8/81
Moths:		<i>Halictus sp</i> (a bee)	9/7/89
<i>Zygaena lonicerae</i> (Narrow-bordered 5-spot Burnet)	4/7/95	Coleoptera:	
<i>Carcina quercana</i>	9/7/89	<i>Aphodius sp</i> (a dung beetle)	9/7/89
<i>Eurrhypara hortulata</i> (Small Magpie)	9/7/89	<i>Coccinella 7-punctata</i> (7-spot Ladybird)	9/7/89
<i>Drepana binaria</i> (Oak Hooktip)	9/7/89	<i>Propylea 14-punctata</i> (14-spot Ladybird)	9/7/89
<i>Habrosyne pyritoides</i> (Bull Arches)	9/7/89	* <i>Acilius sulcatus</i> (a diving beetle)	9/7/89
<i>Idaea aversata</i> (Riband Wave)	9/7/89	*? <i>Orectochilus villosus</i> (Hairy Whirligig Beetle)	
<i>Hydriomena furcata</i> (July Highflyer)	9/7/89	- active at night (not positively identified)	9/3/90
<i>Selenia dentaria</i> (Early Thorn)	9/7/89		and 16/3/95
<i>Ourapteryx sambucaria</i> (Swallow-tailed Moth)	9/7/89	Fish:	
<i>Alcis repandana</i> (Mottled Beauty)	9/7/89	* 3-Spined Stickleback	6/2/95
<i>Agrotis exclamationis</i> (Heart-and-Dart)	9/7/89	Amphibia:	
<i>Noctua pronuba</i> (Large Yellow Underwing)	9/7/89	* Common Frog	6/2/95
<i>Noctua comes</i> (Lesser Yellow Underwing)	9/7/89	* Palmate Newt	51 seen on 16/3/95
<i>Apamea monoglypha</i> (Dark Arches)	9/7/89	Mammals:	
<i>Mesoligia furuncula</i> (Cloaked Minor)	9/7/89	(not a complete list)	
<i>Hoplodrina blanda</i> (The Rustic)	9/7/89	Grey Squirrel	many records
<i>Panemera tenebrata</i> (Small Yellow Underwing)	6/6/96	Fox	20/6/92
<i>Autographa gamma</i> (Silver Y)	6/6/96	Birds:	
Diptera:		(not a complete list)	
<i>Tipula paludosa</i> (a cranefly)	9/7/89	Wood Pigeon	13/3/96
<i>Nephrotoma appendiculata</i> (a cranefly)	9/7/89	Red-headed Conure (a pair escaped from captivity)	9/2/92
<i>Bombylius major</i> (Bee Fly)	20/4/96	Tawny Owl	27/4/92
<i>Volucella pellucens</i> (a hoverfly)	14/7/81	Great Spotted Woodpecker	7/2/86
<i>Physoccephala rufipes</i> (a bee parasite)	25/7/95	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	7/2/86
<i>Sarcophaga carnaria</i> (Flesh Fly)	14/7/81	Grey Wagtail	18/8/96
<i>Calliphora sp</i> (Blue Bottle)	14/7/81	Wren	27/4/92

Robin	27/4/92
Blackbird	27/4/92
Song Thrush	6/2/95
Redwing	16/1/87
Mistle Thrush	13/3/96
Blackcap	27/4/92
Chiffchaff	27/4/92
Willow Warbler	? 10/8/81
Blue Tit	16/1/87
Great Tit	16/1/87
Jay	10/8/81
Goldfinch	14/4/86
Siskin	7/2/86
Redpoll	14/4/86
Linnet	14/4/86

We apologise for all errors and omissions



Early 1950's

FREEMANVILLE Common BITTERNE